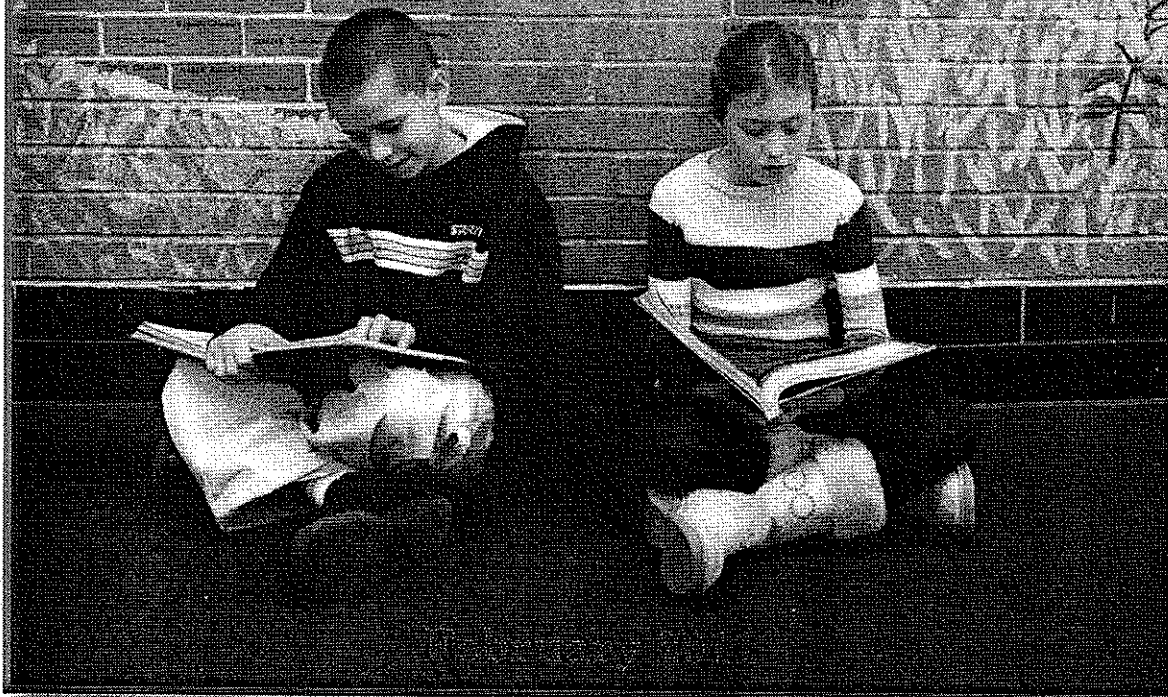


TEK Transforming
Education in
Kentucky

Breaking New Ground:

Final report of the Governor's Task Force
on Transforming Education in Kentucky

Established by Governor Steven L. Beshear



Kentucky
UNBRIDLED SPIRIT

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Feb. 21, 2011

The Honorable Steven L. Beshear
Governor
Commonwealth of Kentucky
State Capitol, 700 Capitol Avenue
Frankfort, Ky. 40601

Dear Governor Beshear:

The Governor's Task Force on Transforming Education in Kentucky has completed its study of Kentucky's education system.

Over the past 15 months, the Task Force met 10 times and hosted a statewide community forum where more than 1,500 Kentuckians shared their views on improving education in the Commonwealth. The group consulted state and national experts as they explored promising and proven practices in Kentucky districts and schools and successful initiatives across the country.

This report offers 35 recommendations that would serve as a blueprint for how schools throughout the Commonwealth can make prompt and significant gains in school readiness, student proficiency, the closing of persistent achievement gaps, graduation rates and college and career readiness and how elected leaders can develop a supportive state policy environment.

These recommendations build on Kentucky's history of innovative education initiatives, from the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) in 1990 to Senate Bill 1 in 2009. The work of the Task Force and these recommendations set the stage for transforming our education system to meet the needs of students in the 21st century.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joseph U. Meyer".

Joseph U. Meyer
Secretary
Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Terry Holliday".

Terry Holliday
Commissioner
Kentucky Department of Education

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert L. King".

Robert L. King
President
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State Senator, 23rd District

Diane Whalen

Mayor, City of Florence

Ken Winters

State Senator, 1st District

Executive Summary

In a move to re-energize the support of public schools that 20 years earlier sparked Kentucky to implement the nation's most comprehensive school reform, Gov. Steven L. Beshear created the Task Force on Transforming Education in Kentucky in October 2009. The goal of the task force was to create a unified vision of what schools in the Commonwealth need to offer in order to better serve students today and tomorrow.

Kentucky has a history of innovative education initiatives – from the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 to Senate Bill 1 of 2009. Over the past 20 years, improvements have been made under KERA to student, school and system performance, including the restructuring of primary schools, new standards and assessments, increased accountability, creation of school councils, and reductions in disparities in school funding.

In almost every legislative session since 1990 the legislature has changed some fundamental part of that reform act. KERA has never stopped evolving. The mission of improving student achievement has been an ongoing process.



Kentucky has made significant and measurable progress, but all the while the world has been dramatically changing. The fundamental foundation of knowledge and skills that one requires to function – and succeed – has expanded far beyond what we could have possibly imagined during the education reform effort of 1990.

The passage of Senate Bill 1 in 2009 set the stage for transforming our education system to meet the needs of 21st century students. It created a sense of urgency. In Kentucky, and across the country, there is an ever-increasing awareness of the need for our schools to prepare their students to meet the complex and constantly evolving demands of the new global economy and society.



Against this backdrop, Gov. Beshear directed the 34-member task force – composed of parents, teachers, superintendents, education advocates, lawmakers, and business and community leaders – to help develop new strategies to ensure Kentucky has the curriculum, teachers, standards, organization and structure in place to prepare children for the 21st century while reinvigorating public and business support for education in the Commonwealth.

Based on its charge by the Governor, the Task Force developed 35 recommendations that would serve as a blueprint for how schools throughout the Commonwealth can make prompt and significant gains in school readiness, student proficiency, the closing of persistent achievement gaps, graduation rates and college and career readiness and how elected leaders can develop a supportive state policy environment.

The keys to success lie beyond K-12 education. It is critical to ensure that the earliest learners – those birth to age 5 – come to school prepared for learning in a school setting and that college students not only enter college but also succeed.

The recommendations made in this report align with and support these values. In addition to initiatives already underway, the task force recommends the following priorities, as well as the complete recommendations found in the full report:

- **Reorganize the Early Childhood Development Authority; create a system of support, including parent education, for students at all levels of kindergarten readiness; and create common school readiness standards and instruments.**
- **Include sufficient funding in the state budget to improve access to effective, high-quality preschool programs.**
- **Require, beginning in 2012-2013, collaboration among state-funded preschool, Head Start, and qualified child care programs in order to access state funding.**
- **Create family literacy programs dedicating new state resources to provide comprehensive family engagement in all schools, especially the Commonwealth's lowest achieving schools.**
- **Raise the compulsory school age, effective in 2016, from 16 to 18 with state-funded supports for students at risk of dropping out.**
- **Create an advisory council, the Advanced Credit Advisory Council, to recommend policies, legislation, and a comprehensive funding model for advanced secondary coursework, college credit during high school, and early graduation options for the 2012 General Assembly.**
- **Establish a steering committee to develop a comprehensive statewide plan for implementing a new model of secondary career and technical education with an emphasis on innovation, integration of core academics, 21st-century skills, project-based learning, and the establishment of full-time CTE programs, for implementation in the 2012 General Assembly.**
- **Implement policies to enhance and expand virtual and blended learning, including funding options to ensure equitable access to students across the Commonwealth.**
- **Include funding in the state budget to expand programs in Kentucky to recruit high-quality teacher candidates, including those who may enter through alternative certification routes.**
- **Ensure school districts incorporate a balance of technology-enhanced formative and summative assessments that measure student mastery of 21st-century skills.**

Building on the past, the proposed recommendations are ambitious in design and substantial in scope. They will not be easy to implement, nor can all of them be implemented quickly. The task force recognizes the fiscal constraints the state has faced and continues to face. Despite these economic challenges, the task force believes there are opportunities that currently exist and has developed some recommendations which do not require new appropriations immediately.

Those recommendations that require legislation and appropriations in the state budget should be considered when future budgets are prepared. Early thoughts on potential costs of implementation are included in Appendix D of this report. The task force believes these actions will enable Kentucky to better prepare all of its students for 21st century success.